by the way, we may remark that there is not yet that current order in the numbering which we expect shortly to see: we had some difficulty, and spent no little time in vain endeavours to hunt out special numbers on the authority of the catalogue, and where they ought to have been found.

Amongst a variety of other notes which we made on this and other classes of exhibited articles, we observe one as to "hollow building blocks for the speedy and economical erection of harbours, docks, wharfwalls, seawalls, embankments, houses, warehouses, sheds, and other buildings, which can be manufactured of potter's clay, Stourbridge clay, brick and tile earth, cement, asphalte," &c.; also (No. 5) "Asser's blocks for building to cause equal distribution of pressure," and which are described on the model as of stone, iron, wood, &c., and "for construction of arches, bridges, tunnels, breakwaters, &c. &c., and for any other architectural purpose." The weight of the bulk, or of any superincumbent pressure, is thus designed to be distributed over and shared by the whole mass. The blocks are intended to interlock into an inseparable structure, the most novel feature of which consists in its forming arches, flat spans, &c., without a keystone.

BRISTOL SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS.

The first annual meeting of this Society was held at the Society's Rooms, Small-street, on Monday, the 5th. Mr. C. Underwood presided, and in the course of his observations said that Mr. J. S. Harford, of Blaize Castle, had accepted the presidentship. The Chairman said, —For the introduction and inculcation of the correct principle of Roman architecture in Britain, we stand, I believe, more indebted than we are aware to the learned men of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who, in the reign of Elizabeth, and still more of James I., brought in with them from their travels a love of the modern Italian style of architecture, based on the principles and taste practised in the most palmy period of the Roman empire. Considering that architecture has been admitted to be and is indebted to men of science, learning, and research in all ages, it is, and should always be, the endeavour of this Society to cultivate the acquaintance of men of science and of letters, assured that by such a course they will acquire a more varied store of useful information, which may often be made to bear upon their peculiar art.

Mr. J. A. Clark, honorary secretary, then read the first annual report of the Society, which contained the following paragraphs:—

"Amongst other subjects, two of great importance have been under the consideration of the council, viz. competition amongst architects and amongst builders. With respect to the former a list of suggestions to committees advertising for designs has been drawn up, and though not by any means so perfect as they may yet be made, still, as they touch on those particular points in which experience has shown errors and injustice most frequently arose, it is hoped that their local use will lead to an improvement on the system hitherto pursued. The council are happy to be able to state that already their suggestions have been well received, and attended to in material points by a committee of gentlemen, who lately advertised for designs in this city.

An arrangement with the builders, associates of this society, to effect, if possible, a more equitable mode of proceedings in trade competition and other matters has also been made, which, it is hoped, in course of time, will lead to beneficial results: this, however, can only be expected where a general determination is shown to abide strictly by the means proposed, whenever practicable, and by mutual confidence in integrity of purpose, when unavoidable circumstances interfere. This being a subject of acknowledged difficulty, the more calls for calm and honest perseverance.

An union with the Society for the promotion of the fine arts, has been concluded, from which the following privileges are derived. The fellows are admitted in the academy on the same terms as their artist members, seven being elected full and voting members of the general body of artists, one of whom will be annually chosen to act as representative of this society on their committee of management. The graduates and students of this society are admitted to all the privileges of the associates and students of the academy. In future exhibitions a space is to be reserved for architectural works exclusively. The opportunity thus afforded to architects to exhibit their designs, at the same time as the artists' pictures, is a great advantage, one which, it is hoped, will, on future occasions, be borne in mind."

WHO CAN MAKE A BUILDINGS ACT?

It has been evident to us for several weeks past that Lord Seymour's Buildings Bill would not be proceeded with, and we have therefore avoided occupying space by its discussion. His lordship has now formally withdrawn it, and it seems pretty clear that we shall have no measure on the subject passed this session. The following communication was in type before the withdrawal of the measure.

Lord Seymour, in his Bill, attempts the impossible task of laying down rules of construction that shall be universally applicable. To succeed in such a task two things are requisite: first, that the art of architecture should have been perfected; lastly, that those who framed the regulations that are to govern construction should have completely mastered that art. As constant improvement in details of construction proves that art is still advancing, and as doubtless future advances far beyond what we can now perceive must be expected, it follows, that to fix rules of construction by law is to stop, or, at least, most materially to retard, that improvement which it is the interest of the whole community to have promoted. The Bill, however, would not only materially retard future progress, but would also prevent the adoption in London of new methods of building which have been proved to have, under certain circumstances, important advantages. For instance, walls of hollow brick may be built so as to be as strong as those of common brick, though thinner and cheaper: such are also warmer and drier. Whether or not their advantages are as great as their advocates expect, surely their use ought not to be prohibited by Act of Parliament; yet such would be the effect of enforcing walls "built so as to produce solid work," and of such thickness as the Bill prescribes, which would render the employment of hollow bricks not economical. The Bill proceeds upon the principle, altogether fallacious, or, at least, subject to innumerable exceptions, that the stability of a building depends upon the thickness of its *external* walls. Now, it is very evident that the *internal* walls may carry much of the weight, and, besides, by acting as buttresses, contribute very materially to the strength.

Again, walls may be built so that the weight shall be carried entirely by iron pillars, or other supports; yet, because the building is of a certain size, its walls must be of a certain thickness: further, it is clear that there is no invariable proportion between the size of a building and the strength necessary for its walls, nor between the strength of its walls and their thickness. Yet upon such presumptions the Bill is founded!

Again, the Bill prescribes numerous regulations with respect to flues and channels for the conveyance of heated air, which, as *general* rules, may be very proper, but to which exceptions ought to be freely permitted. For instance, it is quite right that no woodwork should be placed near to a channel conveying *hot* air; but such a rule need not be applied with respect to air which is only to be gently warmed, say by warm water or steam, and the probibition of pipes conveying steam or hot water near to woodwork is a useless and vexatious interference, except indeed with regard to pipes in which water heated under pressure is to be conveyed. Such rules, unless exceptions be freely admitted (which, if a lawyer is to judge, is very unlikely), will not merely entail upon builders unnecessary expense and annoyance, but throw great obstacles in the way of improved modes of warming and ventilating buildings, and thus retard sanitary advancement.

Though Lord Seymour professes that his Bill is to protect the health of the inmates of buildings, it contains few regulations of a sanitary nature, and most of these few are very unsatisfactory. For instance, though it prescribes a minimum width of new streets, it does not limit the height of the buildings in proportion to the width of the street, as is done by the local Act of Liverpool, which provides that no building shall be erected so as to exceed the width of the street in which it is situated. The observance of some such proportion is evidently requisite to secure the full benefits of light and ventilation. Again, the Bill provides that no room without a window towards a street or alley shall be inhabited. This provision will not prevent the erection of houses back to back, which cannot be properly ventilated, and are necessarily insalubrious. The construction of cellars for habitation is not prohibited, as they are in places where the Public Health Act is in operation, nor are the regulations for existing cellar-dwellings in the Bill so protective of the public health as those of that Act.

The provisions that no dangerous manufacture, such as gunpowder or firework making, and no noxious or offensive trade, such as bone, blood, or soap boiling, shall be commenced within 50 feet of any building, are too glaringly ineffective to be regarded as sanitary precautions. If any such businesses are carried on to such an extent as to be dangerous or noxious at all, the interval of 50 feet is no protection against the evil: if they are carried on to so small an extent as not to be dangerous or noxious, it is unjust to interfere with them. On either supposition the proposed enactment is absurd, and must be injurious.

It is clear that legislation of details on such subjects is impossible, without on the one hand enforcing conditions which in many instances must be oppressive and injurious, and on the other leaving uncontrolled evils of great magnitude. As it is unlawful to sell food which is unwholesome, so ought it to be unlawful to let a house which is insalubrious: but as penal legislation on such a subject would be attended with serious evils and inconveniences, the best way of effecting the object appears to be by enacting that no house shall be let or re-let unless, after examination by a competent and responsible officer, it is certified to be reasonably safe against the dangers of fire or of falling down, and in all respects fit for the habitation of human beings, that is to say, sufficiently ventilated, lighted, drained, and supplied with wholesome water. If, instead of the cumbersome, ineffective, and inordinately expensive legislation with which Lord Seymour threatens us, the simple principle were adopted of allowing every man to build his house in his own way, on the simple condition that, before being let, it shall be certified as to its fitness as a place of habitation, the progress of the art of building would not be needlessly impeded; useless expense would not be imposed upon builders; new and improved modes of construction would not be prohibited by Act of Parliament; while the public health and individual security would receive real instead of fictitious protection.

H.

Foul Air Pump.—Mr. R. Simms, of St. James's-street, Liverpool, has invented a machine for pumping foul air from cesspools or the holds of ships. It has been tried before the officers of the health committee and several scientific gentlemen, at a huge tunnel middle under Corfe's buildings, Preeson's-row. Three night-men were, in the first instance, sent down into the tunnel, which was closed upon them, and the machine was then set in motion which evidently discharged the foul air rapidly. The men stated that when they first went down the foul air powerfully affected them; but as soon as the machine commenced working they felt a sensible relief; and when it had been in operation a short time the usual effects of the foul gas were not experienced.—*Albion.*

To learn how to use PDF Compression and OCR visit our website